

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 18-21 and 43-62 are currently pending in the application. Claim 18 stands rejected and claims 19-21 and 43-62 stand objected to. By this amendment, claim 18 is amended, claim 46 is cancelled and new claims 63-87 are added. It is respectfully submitted that the pending claims define allowable subject matter.

In the specification, paragraph [01] has been amended to add the patent number for the associated application. No new matter is added.

Claim 18 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Auvinen et al., U.S. Patent No. 4,954,987 ("*Auvinen*"), Kendall et al, U.S. Patent No. 5,903,496 ("*Kendall*") or Williams et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,400,631 ("*Williams*"). Independent claim 18 is amended to include features indicated by the Examiner to be allowable. Therefore, the Applicants submit that the §102(b) rejection of claim 18 has been overcome.

More particularly, Claim 18 has been amended to include the allowable features of claim 46. The combination of elements and limitations of amended independent claim 18 are not found within the references. Specifically, for example, neither *Auvinen*, *Kendall* nor *Williams* discloses "said at least one cluster device is a self-timed local element interfacing with at least said muxing device," among other features. As all the elements of the claimed invention are not disclosed in a single reference, Applicants respectfully submit that amended claim 18 is allowable.

Claims 19-21, 43-45 and 47-50 depend from amended independent claim 18, directly or indirectly. All the dependent claims recite additional features and are believed allowable for all the reasons provided above with respect to claim 18.

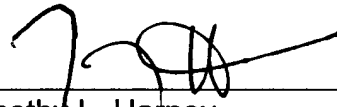
The Office Action further provides that claims 51-62 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants respectfully submit that previously presented claims 51 and 58 are independent claims, and are therefore allowable as indicated by the Examiner. Further, previously presented claims 52-57 and 59-62 depend from independent claims 51 and 58 respectively. All the dependent claims recite additional features and are believed allowable for all the reasons provided above with respect to claims 51 and 58, as indicated by the Examiner.

Applicants submit that new claims 63-87 are allowable. New independent claim 63 includes the allowable elements of claim 19, among other features; new claim independent 72 includes the allowable elements of claim 20, among other features; new independent claim 80 includes the allowable elements of claim 21, among other features; while new independent claim 86 includes the allowable elements of claim 49 among other features. New claims 64-71 depend from new independent claim 63; new claims 73-79 depend from new independent claim 72; new claims 81-85 depend from new independent claim 80; while new claim 87 depends from new independent claim 86. All the dependent claims recite additional features and are believed allowable for all the reasons provided above with respect to claims 63, 72, 80 and 86, respectively.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims define allowable subject matter, and Applicant respectfully request that the application be passed to issuance. Should the Examiner have any questions, he is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

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Respectfully submitted,



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